

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

Claim 1 (Currently Amended): A color separation method for determining quantities of a plurality of color inks in order to reproduce an arbitrary color with the plurality of color inks on a printing medium, the method comprising the steps of:

(a) defining an ink set that includes as useable inks a plurality of chromatic primary color inks that when used in combination can reproduce achromatic color, and at least one spot color ink of hue different from any of the plurality of chromatic primary color inks;

(b) determining a plurality of reproduction colors to be reproduced on a print medium according to a plurality of input colors within a chromatic primary color space, a term “reproduction color” denoting a color to be reproduced on the print medium according to any one input color, a term “color separation ink quantity set” denoting a combination of ink quantities of the ink set for reproducing a reproduction color on the print medium, a term “chromatic primary color space” denoting a color space having base vectors representing ink quantities of the plurality of chromatic primary color inks; and

(c) determining a plurality of color separation ink quantity sets for reproducing the plurality of reproduction colors,

wherein the step (b) includes the steps of:

(b1) determining an outermost shell color separation ink quantity set associated with outermost shell chromatic color, where the outermost shell chromatic color refers to chromatic color at an outermost shell location within the primary color space, the outermost shell color separation ink quantity set being used for reproducing extended chromatic color that is reproducible with the ink set and that has higher saturation than the outermost shell chromatic color; and

(b2) determining the plurality of reproduction colors associated respectively with the plurality of input colors within the primary color space, based on relationship between the outermost shell chromatic color and the outermost shell color separation ink quantity set,

wherein the step (b1) includes the steps of:

establishing an upper limit of useable ink quantity per unit of area of the print medium as an ink duty limit; and

determining the extended chromatic color as a color represented by an extended chromatic color vector of greater length having a same direction as an outermost shell

chromatic color vector representing the outermost shell chromatic color in the primary color space, and determining the outermost shell color separation ink quantity set for reproducing the extended chromatic color;

wherein determination of the extended chromatic color and the outermost shell color separation ink quantity set is performed so as to meet the following condition:

(i) the outermost shell color separation ink quantity set is within the ink duty limit, wherein the step (c) includes, for each reproduction color, the steps of:

(c1) calculating a lightness parameter value correlated to lightness of the reproduction color; and

(c2) adjusting an ink quantity of the spot color ink in the color separation ink quantity set in accordance with the lightness parameter value, so as to reduce the ink quantity at a rate of change greater than a rate of change of the lightness parameter value when the lightness parameter changes in a lighter direction,

wherein the step (c2) includes adjusting the spot color ink quantity such that an actual ink quantity of the spot color ink is smaller than a hypothetical ink quantity of the spot color ink when the lightness parameter value is in a predetermined brightest range, the hypothetical ink quantity being defined to be ink quantity of a spot color ink included in the color separation ink quantity set for reproducing the reproduction color and being obtainable by adjusting ink quantity of each ink in the color separation ink quantity set so as to minimize a sum of ink quantities,

and wherein the reproduction color is a color reproduced by a provisional color separation ink quantity set derived by multiplying the outermost shell color separation ink quantity set for the outermost shell chromatic color having a same vector as the input color in the primary color space, by a ratio of a length of the input color vector to a length of the outermost shell chromatic color vector.

Claim 2 (Original): A color separation method according to claim 1, wherein the step (c2) includes adjusting the ink quantity of the spot color ink such that decrease of the spot color ink quantity with respect to change of the lightness parameter value exceeds decrease of the chromatic primary color ink quantities with respect to the change of the lightness parameter value.

Claim 3 (Original): A color separation method according to claim 1, wherein the step (c2) includes adjusting the spot color ink quantity so as to decrease at a greater rate than a rate proportional to the lightness parameter value.

Claim 4 (Canceled).

Claim 5 (Original): A color separation method according to claim 1, wherein the step (c2) includes adjusting the spot color ink quantity such that a proportion of actual ink quantity of the spot color ink to a hypothetical ink quantity of the spot color ink decreases monotonically with respect to change of the lightness parameter value in the lighter direction, the hypothetical ink quantity being defined to be ink quantity of a spot color ink included in the color separation ink quantity set for reproducing the reproduction color and being obtainable by adjusting ink quantity of each ink in the color separation ink quantity set so as to minimize a sum of ink quantities.

Claim 6 (Original): A color separation method according to claim 1, wherein the step (c2) includes adjusting the spot color ink quantity such that the ink quantity of the spot color ink is set zero in a first range which is a brightest part of an entire range of the lightness parameter value.

Claim 7 (Original): A color separation method according to claim 1, wherein the lightness parameter value is a maximum value assumable by ink quantity of the spot color ink when reproducing the reproduction color.

Claim 8 (Original): A color separation method according to claim 1, wherein the step (c2) comprises the steps of:

(c2-1) calculating a temporary ink quantity of the spot color ink from the lightness parameter value;

(c2-2) determining temporary ink quantities for the chromatic primary color inks which in conjunction with the temporary ink quantity of the spot color ink are needed to reproduce the reproduction color, thereby obtaining a temporary ink quantity set; and

(c2-3) adopting the temporary ink quantity set per se as the color separation ink quantity set when the temporary ink quantity set is within ink duty limits which limit an upper value of ink quantity useable per unit of area of the print medium, and when the temporary ink quantity set exceeds the ink duty limits, correcting the temporary ink quantity set so as to meet the ink duty limits to determine the color separation ink quantity set.

Claim 9 (Original): A color separation method according to claim 8, wherein the ink set includes first and second spot color inks,

the step (c1) includes calculating the lightness parameter value for each of the first and second spot color inks independently,

the step (c2-1) includes determining temporary ink quantities of the first and second spot color inks based on the lightness parameter value for each of the first and second spot color inks, and

the step (c2-3) includes, when the temporary ink quantity set exceeds the ink duty limits, determining the color separation ink quantity set such that, within a two-dimensional color space defined by ink quantities of the first and second spot color inks, a color coordinate point defined by color separation ink quantities of the first and second spot color inks is present inside a range that meets the ink duty limits and situated in proximity to another color coordinate point defined by the temporary ink quantities of the first and second spot color inks.

Claim 10 (Original): A color separation method according to claim 9, wherein the step (c2-3) includes, when the temporary ink quantity set exceeds the ink duty limits, determining the color separation ink quantity set such that, within the two-dimensional color space relating to ink quantities of the first and second spot color inks, a color coordinate point defined by color separation ink quantities of the first and second spot color inks is present inside a range that meets the ink duty limits, and such that a ratio of the color separation ink quantities of the first and second spot color inks is equal to a ratio of the temporary ink quantities of the first and second spot color inks.

Claim 11 (Original): A color separation method according to claim 1, wherein the ink set includes a plurality of the spot color inks, and

the step (c2) includes performing adjustment of each ink quantity of the spot color inks by means of limiting a value assumable by a specific spot color ink parameter to a smaller range in association with higher lightness indicated by the lightness parameter value, the spot color ink parameter having characteristic of increasing in association with greater ink quantities of a spot color ink included in the color separation ink quantity set.

Claim 12 (Original): A color separation method according to claim 1, wherein the spot color ink contains colorant different from colorants of the plurality of chromatic primary color inks.

Claim 13 (Original): A color separation method according to claim 1, wherein the spot color ink is able to reproduce higher saturation than a mixture of the chromatic primary color inks when a hue reproducible by the spot color ink is reproduced by the mixture of the plurality of chromatic primary color inks.

Claim 14 (Canceled).

Claim 15 (Previously Presented): A color separation method according to claim 1, wherein determination of the extended chromatic color and the outermost shell color separation ink quantity set is performed so as to additionally meet the following condition:

(ii) length of the extended chromatic color vector is the greatest length within a range reproducible by the ink set.

Claim 16 (Previously Presented): A color separation method according to claim 1, wherein determination of the extended chromatic color and the outermost shell color separation ink quantity set is performed so as to additionally meet the following condition:

(iii) total ink quantity of the outermost shell color separation ink quantity set for reproducing the extended chromatic color is the smallest possible.

Claims 17 and 18 (Canceled).

Claim 19 (Original): A color separation method according to claim 1, wherein the ink set includes black ink, and

the step (b) comprises the step of calculating a corrected input color composed of a plurality of chromatic primary color components which are decreased so as to produce a black component by means of an under color removal process for the black ink on the input color,

and wherein the reproduction color is determined according to the corrected input color.

Claims 20-49 (Canceled).